

# Australian Garden HISTORY

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Cover: A much-loved image of Western Australia's wildflower wonders adorning the cover of a government tourist booklet dating from 1939.

Private collection

An area of woodland in Melbourne's Royal Park that opens onto the large, native grassland 'circle' (near the intersection of Elliot Avenue and the No. 55 tram line), photographed in 2013—of exceptional aesthetic significance. This is one area of Royal Park that would be completely obliterated by the proposed East West Link tunnel project (see AGHS News and story on page 35).

Photo: Christina Dyson

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# Gardens, nature, and society

Lyn Beazley

As Chief Scientist of Western Australia, and a biologist to the core, I am honoured and delighted to contribute to this excellent publication. For our state, as for any community on this diverse and amazing planet, gardens are in many ways windows to the worlds of both nature and society.

Australian gardens, including those in Western Australia, are increasingly framed around our extraordinary biodiversity. Indeed the southwest of Western Australia is the only part of Australia to be an internationally recognised biodiversity ‘hotspot’, one of 30 or so such areas globally. Our trees, many grown in gardens, feature strongly in the 15,000 flowering plants recorded in the state. With a changing climate amongst the many threats to formerly flourishing species, gardens and gardeners will play an increasing role in protecting endangered species and indirectly the animals on which they are dependent.

An example is the beautiful long-leaf persoonia (*Persoonia longifolia*), known less melodiously also as the snottygobble, that although fading from our forests between Albany and Perth is finding a new life as a garden tree. Over the summer months, we enjoy the short sprays of dark yellow to orange flowers yet these are important in others ways: they attract native bees, so important to pollinate many native flowering plants, as well as the Western Brown Butterfly (*Heteronympha merope duboulayi*). The good news is that scientists at Kings Park and Botanical Gardens in Perth have just discovered the conditions necessary for the seed of this species to germinate, helping to ensure a ready supply for our gardens.

Our garden trees can also help us to learn, and share with the next generation of young Australians, links to our Aboriginal heritage. Many trees we now enjoy for their beauty are a potential source of ‘bush tucker’ and have other vital uses. As an example, the succulent bright red fruits of the quondong or native peach (*Santalum acuminatum*) can be made into jams and jellies whilst its kernel can be roasted.

However, no consideration of Australian garden trees is complete without mention of the stunning banksias, a food source to the first Australians as well as being of outstanding beauty. The flower spikes of bull banksia (*Banksia grandis*), for instance, can be used to make a drink of honey-sweet mead, the nectar can be sucked directly from the plant, and grubs that burrow into the flower spikes can be gathered and eaten. Yet, as with other banksias, this botanically significant species is very sensitive to dieback disease, increasing the urgency for its adoption into gardens.

I hope that this journal and its readers will help to ensure that gardens and the trees nurtured within them continue to play a key role in our lives—for their beauty, the sense of sanctuary they instil, the scientific significance they possess, and the appreciation of our history they afford.

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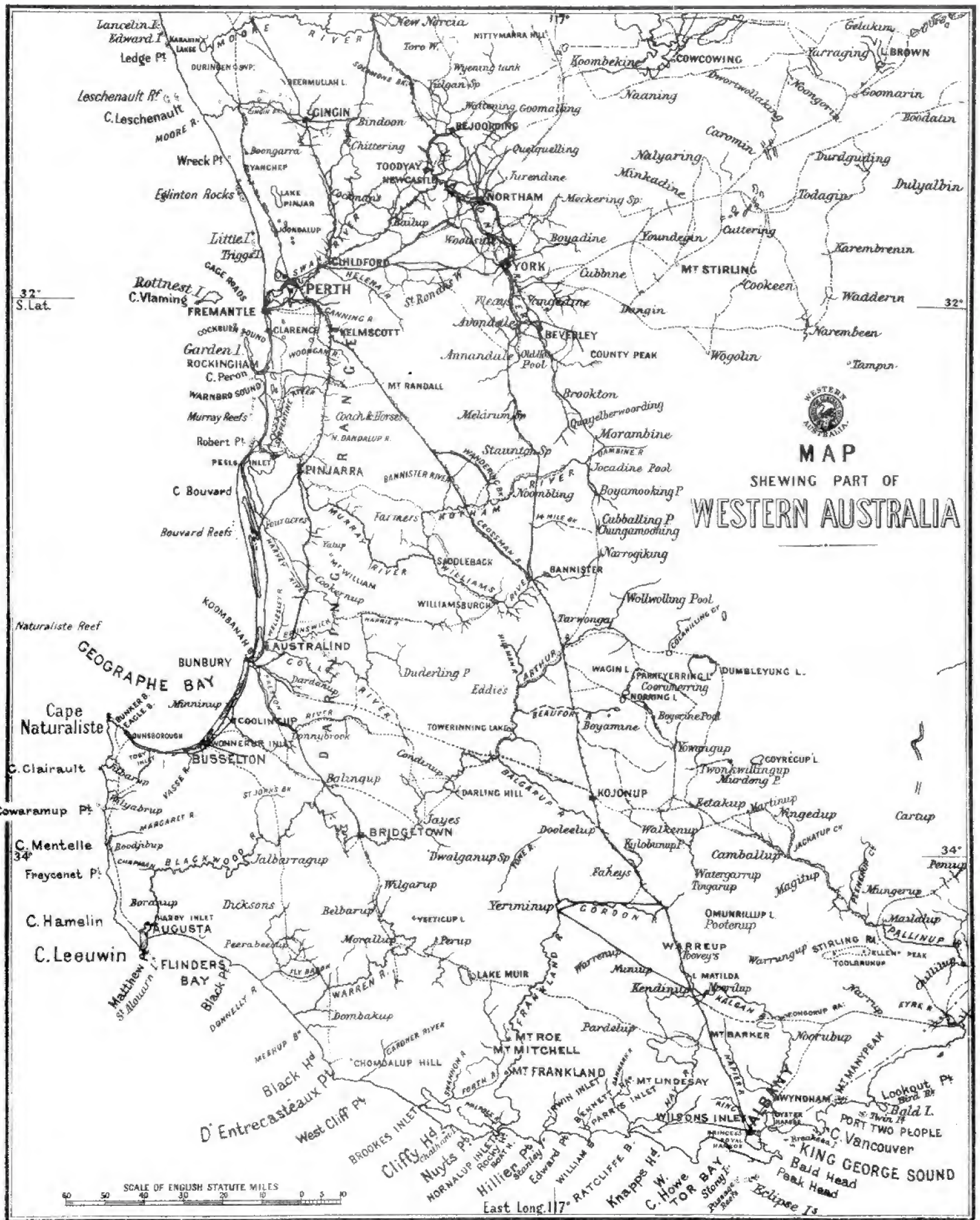
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This 1886 map of WA shows the major waymarks on the current Albany Highway route, leaving Kelmscott near Perth, passing through Kojonup and Mount Barker before arriving in Albany. Unusually for its date, the map also includes many Nyoongar place names.  
Royal Western Australian Historical Society





John Charles Ryan

## *Overland from Perth to Albany: a journey of botanical intrigue*

The journey from Perth to Albany—a pleasure to be enjoyed by delegates to the 2014 AGHS annual national conference—has long been a beguiling byway of botanical intrigue.

In the founding years of the Swan River Colony, an overland route between Perth and Albany became a preoccupation of the new government under Captain Stirling. A serviceable track between Swan River and King George Sound would be the basis of a vital economic and communications network linking the isolated settlements. Moreover, a continuous road would serve as a potent symbol of settler ambition in the harsh and unfamiliar Western Australian landscape.

For today's travellers along the Albany Highway, the journey reverberates with intriguing anecdotes from the historical record. On the one hand,

surveyors, explorers, convicts, homesteaders, and mail carriers endured thirst, starvation, isolation, and the elements as they crossed the unmapped hinterlands of the colony. On the other, early naturalists and botanical artists experienced a sense of euphoria in encountering profuse wildflowers carpeting the hills and valleys during spring months. And, on closer inspection, the plants themselves still seem to confound the botanical norms of the other hemisphere.

The 410-kilometre trip now takes approximately five hours by car. Southbound travellers leave the Perth suburbs of Kelmscott and Armadale, ascend the Darling Scarp, cross the Hotham and Williams rivers and, in time, gain a sudden glimpse of the mountainous Stirling Range and Porongorups to the east before arriving in Albany and the Great Southern region. Not limited to the automobile, twenty-first century sojourners can still traverse the landscape by coach, train, horseback, or foot.

Duncan Cooper's watercolour painting of Albany's Princess Royal Harbour (c.1854), so named in the late eighteenth century by George Vancouver after Princess Charlotte Augusta Matilda. National Library of Australia (nla.pic-an 2686136)





The Grove of the  
Unforgotten within  
Araluen Botanic Park.  
Photo: John Ryan

## *the journey reverberates with intriguing anecdotes from the historical record*

The pedestrian-only Bibbulmun Track parallels the Albany Highway from Jarrahdale State Forest and the Monadnocks Reserve, intersecting the bitumen at North Bannister, and then striking a southwesterly course through the karri country of Pemberton and Walpole. Bearing the name of the Nyoongar people of the South-West, the 963-kilometre 'Bib' track was proposed by bushwalker Geoff Schafer in 1972 and completed nearly twenty-five years later, including trackside shelters and water tanks. Look out for the yellow Dreamtime serpent route markers near the Bibbulmun's terminus at the Albany Visitor Centre overlooking Princess Royal Harbour at journey's end.

After Armadale, Bannister is the next waymark. In 1830, explorer and pastoralist Thomas Bannister led the first attempt by a European to forge an overland passage. The party paralleled

the course of the later highway until crossing the Williams River, followed the Hillman River south, and veered perilously off course towards Mount Roe and the Southern Ocean. On reaching Broke Inlet near present-day Walpole, exhausted, famished, and disoriented, Bannister and his party walked another nineteen days east through thickly forested country until arriving at the Albany outpost on King George Sound (which had been named in 1791 after the reigning monarch by British explorer George Vancouver).

Now only faintly detectable on maps, the towns of Bannister and North Bannister were once crucial resupply points for the fortnightly horse-drawn Royal Mail service. By 1840, mail carriers left Perth on the fifteenth of each month, taking twelve days to reach Albany. After three days recuperation, the team commenced the return trip on the first of the following month. The loss of freight to fires, floods, and bushrangers incited constant public complaints. The horse-drawn mail cycle continued until the advent of railway and road lines connecting the settlements.

A short diversion from the highway now takes you to Araluen Botanic Park. Sheltered from prevailing winds, the valley microclimate produces a unique botanical haven. The area is colder and wetter than Perth, offering ideal conditions for rhododendrons, azaleas, and species uncommon to the Mediterranean climate



Ellis Rowan's c.1870  
painting of Elegant  
Pronaya (*Billardiera  
fraseri*)—limited to  
an area around Perth,  
this climber produces  
purple flowers during  
the summer months.

National Library of  
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of the city. Businessman J.J. 'Boss' Simons envisioned a holiday camp where urban youth could return to nature by tending gardens, felling trees, and constructing dams—Araluen literally means 'singing waters' and 'place of lilies'. Nowhere are these poetic nuances more apposite than at the Grove of the Unforgotten, designed as a memorial to eighty-nine boys killed in World War I. Pencil pines (*Cupressus* spp.) mixed with indigenous marri trees (*Corymbia calophylla*) enclose a series of terraces shaped like a lyre, a symbol of music. Waterfalls topple through the lyre's centre to the Pool of Reflection, bestrewn with water lilies—all redolent of the 1930s. Expect magnolias, fuchsias, leschenaultias, and pimeleas in October and November; Araluen is also famous for its tulip season each September. Leaving the Araluen oasis, some of the South-West plants that provoked the curiosity of early diarists, writers, and artists are to be found. Balga or grasstree (*Xanthorrhoea preissii*) is a primordial and profoundly slow-growing tree that can live for over five-hundred years. Indeed, there are unconfirmed rumours of a grove in Gosnells, at

the head of the Albany Highway, exceeding seven hundred years. In its distinct growth habit, the balga symbolises the adaptability of the biota here. The composer and traveller Thomas Wood wrote of his visit in the bestseller *Cobbers* (1934), personifying the tree as a 'strange fascination'. 'He stands, twisted and knobbly, among the moss and feathery bracken' he wrote, 'wearing a mop of tousled grass overtopped by a spear'.

Although not as conspicuous as the balga, the western quandong (*Santalum acuminatum*), a relative of the aromatic sandalwood that was transported to Albany along this route, is another small tree populating the overland journey. Bannister characterised the quandong, using his powers of sight and taste, as about as large as an English plum tree. 'It bears a nut, almost round, having a strong shell and as large as a pidgeons [sic] egg, with small holes in it similar to the Almond, and an outer covering which it throws off apparently when ripe' he observed. 'The kernel we found nutritive, possessing a glutenous property and very easy of digestion'. Given the time of year of his overland journey, it is clear

Marianne North's overland voyage resulted in the stunning, though slightly elm-like, rendering of *Nuytsia* in 'Study of the West Australian Flame-tree or Fire-tree' (c.1880).  
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew  
(Marianne North Painting 764)





Left: Marianne North's painting of Candlestick Banksia (*Banksia attenuata*) in 'A West Australian Banksia' (c.1880) captures the vibrant colouration and expressive qualities of this species.

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (Marianne North Painting 775)

Right: Ellis Rowan's c.1885 painting of Hidden Featherflower (*Verticordia habrantha*)—occurring along the south coast of Western Australia, the spindly shrub exhibits pink and white flowers in late spring.

National Library of Australia (nla.pic-vn4363829)

that Bannister sampled the dregs of the season's quandong riches. The tangy, crimson-coloured drupes ripen earlier, in late spring or summer.

Beginning in early November, the luminous golden flower of the Christmas tree (*Nuytsia floribunda*) emblazons the stretch between the Williams and Arthur River districts. The peripatetic English botanical artist Marianne North passed through by carriage. North wrote in ecstatic terms about the hemi-parasitic tree: 'I shall never forget one plain we came to, entirely surrounded by the nuytsia or mistletoe trees, in a full blaze of bloom. It looked like a bush-fire without smoke. The trees are, many of them, as big as average oaks in our hedgerows at home, and the stems are mere pith, not wood'. Also in the late nineteenth century, Canadian novelist Gilbert Parker, travelling on the new railway, echoed North's appreciation of the pleasing composition of the bush during this time of year: 'the yellow cabbage-tree flower [*Nuytsia*] is gleaming near, flanked by the white-and-green banksia, and a blossoming gum-tree is full of a regal beauty'.



Between 1835 and 1837, surveyor Alfred Hillman had endured several trips between the settlements of the region. On the first of these, he found the fresh water spring at Kojonup; but on his next trip, he and party nearly perished of thirst near the Beaufort River. Nowadays, the Kojonup area is known for its orchid diversity, including white spider, darting spider, greenhood, rabbit, donkey, and jug orchids. The Kojonup Visitor Centre, including Kodja Place, is now a treasure trove for information on the cultural and natural aspects of the area.

*The peripatetic English botanical artist Marianne North wrote in ecstatic terms*

Views of the Stirling Range and its highest peak, Bluff Knoll, soon appear, as surveyor John Septimus Roe exclaimed in 1835, 'burst[ing] on our view in great magnificence as we rounded the crest'. Roe's contemporary, colonial botanist James Drummond, found plants everywhere he could look: 'I had scarcely time to make myself



acquainted with this fine *Banksia* when I found another exceedingly interesting and beautiful plant [*Darwinia macrostegia*], the bracts of which he compared to ‘the petals of the finest tulip and they are almost as large, hanging in a bell’. There are sixty species of *Darwinia* in Western Australia, including the success bell (*Darwinia nubigena*) and many others that only occur here. In fact Drummond established a garden near Perth where he cultivated plants obtained from his inland expeditions, sending seeds and specimens from this stock to London’s Kew Gardens.

The ‘fine *Banksia*’ on Mount Mongerup was described by Drummond as ‘a splendid new *Banksia* [*Banksia solandri*] with leaves more than nine inches long and about five inches wide, irregularly jagged and serrated like an English Oak’. Similarly, on her overland passage, artist Marianne North was enamoured of banksias ‘covered with their young leaves and shoots of rich yellow, brown, or white ... the native wigmans of bark or leaves looked picturesque under them’. The modern-day fascination for the genus is palpable at Banksia Farm in Mount Barker, about thirty minutes from Albany. The farm is known for its collection of banksias from around Australia.

*As you pause to reflect you might  
still feel the euphoria of botanical  
artists who revelled in the unparalleled  
botanical richness of the region*

Albany had been established in 1826 when three British ships travelled from Sydney to stake claim to the region and discourage French settlement. Naturalists and artists soon followed. In 1854, the renowned phycologist W.H. Harvey arrived there before departing overland for Fremantle. Botanical illustrator Ellis Rowan painted ‘*Verticordia habrantha*’ in 1885 around the time she befriended Marianne North. It was North who described Albany as ‘a natural flower-garden’, observing that ‘in one place I sat down, and without moving could pick twenty-five different flowers within reach of my hand’. In particular, she extolled the scallop hakea (*Hakea cucullata*) as ‘one of the remarkable plants of the world’ and noted ‘strange plants known as “kangaroo’s feet” [*Anigozanthos* spp.]’.

The chortling cascades of Araluen, the orchids of Kojonup, and the alpine wildflowers of the Stirling Range are a few of the many beguiling features of botanical intrigue from Perth to Albany. As you

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pause to reflect during the overland journey, you might still feel the exhaustion of surveyors, the exasperation of homesteaders, the exhilaration of naturalists, and the euphoria of botanical artists who revelled in the unparalleled botanical richness of the region.

## Acknowledgements

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Originally from the eastern United States, **John Charles Ryan** moved to Western Australia in 2008, and has since developed an interest in the cultural history of the South-West flora. He is Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Communications and Arts at Edith Cowan University, Perth.





Leonie Matthews

## Oline Richards: 'winds of change'

Oline Richards 'working from home' at Constance Street, Darlington, in the 1970s, and at the Perth launch of *The Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens* (a book for which she was a generous contributor) in 2002.

Oline Richards was amongst our pioneering garden historians and this outline of her life and work celebrates the valuable contribution she has made to our evolving understanding of Australia's designed landscapes.

My earliest recollection of meeting Oline Richards was at her presentation on Western Australian landscape heritage delivered to a group of fourth year architecture students at Curtin University (then Curtin University of Technology) in 1989. While I remember little of the specific details of her lecture, I was fascinated by Oline's work as a heritage practitioner and over the ensuing years have had the privilege to learn more about her work through my own broad research on Western Australian architectural history.

Oline Richards (*née* Hall) was born in Sydney in 1935 and moved to Perth with her family where she completed her secondary education. Whilst studying architecture at Perth Technical College in the 1950s she met fellow student Duncan Richards whom she later married. By 1960 Oline's

interests had moved to landscape architecture and for the next two years she worked in the nascent Landscape Section of the Public Works Department headed by renowned landscape architect John Oldham (1907–1999).

In 1964 Oline and Duncan Richards moved to the bushland setting of Darlington in the Perth Hills, a place associated with some of Western Australia's best-known artists and writers. With their two young children, Helen and Angus, and Duncan's maternal grandfather Andrew Duncan, they moved in 1969 to their newly constructed house in Constance Street, Darlington. The house consisted of two lightweight steel-framed pavilions and the design was an important part of the Richards' exploration of ways of living. In 1976 Oline wrote (in text accompanying presentation drawings of 'House for an intersection in the Hills environment') of the way that they had imagined the house as 'a workshop for living'. It was, she noted: 'A modest, habitable place, inconspicuous in its visible form, expansive in its life aspirations; integrated with the environment & unassertive in the wider community order.'



The historical interests of Oline Richards not only evolved from her work as a landscape architect but her wider interests in social and cultural conditions. In our most recent correspondence Oline reflected that she considered her interest as 'primarily concerned with landscape, rather than garden heritage, and the research and fieldwork involved in discovering the background history of places, the social and physical factors determining what happened and in identifying the layers of development over time.' Most influential to her approach was the work of the English historian William George Hoskins whose book *The Making of the English Landscape* (1955) was a seminal text. 'In the 1970s the writing and later BBC programs of English landscape interpreter, W.G. Hoskins, I found captivating', Oline wrote to me in 2007: 'His way of looking at the landscape, questioning and analysing the visual evidence and relating this to the historical record remains with me to this day.'

Oline Richards has had a long association with the Australian Garden History Society and was a founding member in 1980. As the West Australian representative on the Society's national committee, Oline attended many of the early conferences held in the various states. At this stage, the pioneering study she and Duncan had completed for the National Trust of Australia (WA) in 1980, 'Historic Gardens Study (WA)' had established her credentials as a pioneer of Australian garden history and heritage. This was soon complemented by the Richards' report 'Gardens and Trees in the Kimberley: a survey of historic places, gardens & trees' (1983), notable as one of the earliest regional garden heritage studies.

The most memorable gathering of this early period was the workshop held in Tasmania in 1979 bringing together those from each state and territory undertaking historic garden surveys. In our recent correspondence Oline Richards recalled the event.

*There were representatives from all the states attending and the event was superbly organised by the two Tasmanian delegates Phyl Simons and Miranda Morris-Nunn. All those at the workshop had been pioneers in their various states in undertaking garden and landscape heritage studies ... We visited some wonderful heritage properties in the Launceston area, with extensive grounds, historic homesteads and farm buildings, and magnificent old*

*trees. The wealth of northern Tasmania in the early 19th century, riding on the prosperity of its wool industry was clearly manifest in these aging but intact rural landscapes. While I'm sure the decision to form a society had been made before the gathering in Tasmania, by the end of the workshop all those there endorsed the idea wholeheartedly and plans were made for the First Garden History Conference to be held in Melbourne the following year. The society was established to undertake serious research into garden and landscape history and to promote the conservation of such—up until this time heritage concerns had been solely focussed on the natural environment and architectural heritage—so this was a significant movement to redress the oversight of landscape heritage.*

Oline presented a paper, 'Gardens in Remote Areas', at the first Garden History Conference in Melbourne 1980 and was a regular contributor to the Australian Garden History Society's journal from the 1980s to the early 2000s, initially considering herself 'something of a lone voice from WA'. She was also a contributor to the Society's other important publications, including *The Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens* (2002), *Planting the Nation* (2001) and the first volume of *Studies in Australian Garden History* (2003).

While there had been growing concern for the conservation of Western Australia's built environment, heritage legislation was not adopted by the state until 1990. As a heritage consultant, Oline Richards completed studies of many significant Western Australian places including East Perth Cemetery, Government House, and Supreme Court Gardens. In 1996 she was presented with a Heritage Council of Western Australia award acknowledging her contribution to landscape heritage conservation. In Oline's acceptance speech she made these thoughtful comments:

*What is especially pleasing is that it is giving recognition of aspects of heritage which I'm involved with, which have a much lower profile, in particular landscape heritage, which is quite often overlooked ... I would like to hope that while not exactly a gale force yet, the winds of change are gently blowing.*



The rigorous approach of Oline Richards and her sensitive and poetic style of writing have provided a distinctive way of viewing the landscape. The significance of her work is that it has revealed what could have remained hidden, records that may otherwise have been lost, and it suggests further work to be done.

After many years living in Perth and dedicating much of their time to the history and heritage of Western Australia's built environment, Oline and Duncan Richards moved to Sydney in 2007; a new phase in their life, and where they continue their reading and writing. Looking back now to my first meeting with Oline I appreciate something my twenty-something self could not, something demonstrated by Oline's contribution to our understanding of Australian designed landscapes—the importance of a long-term commitment to bringing about change and making a difference.

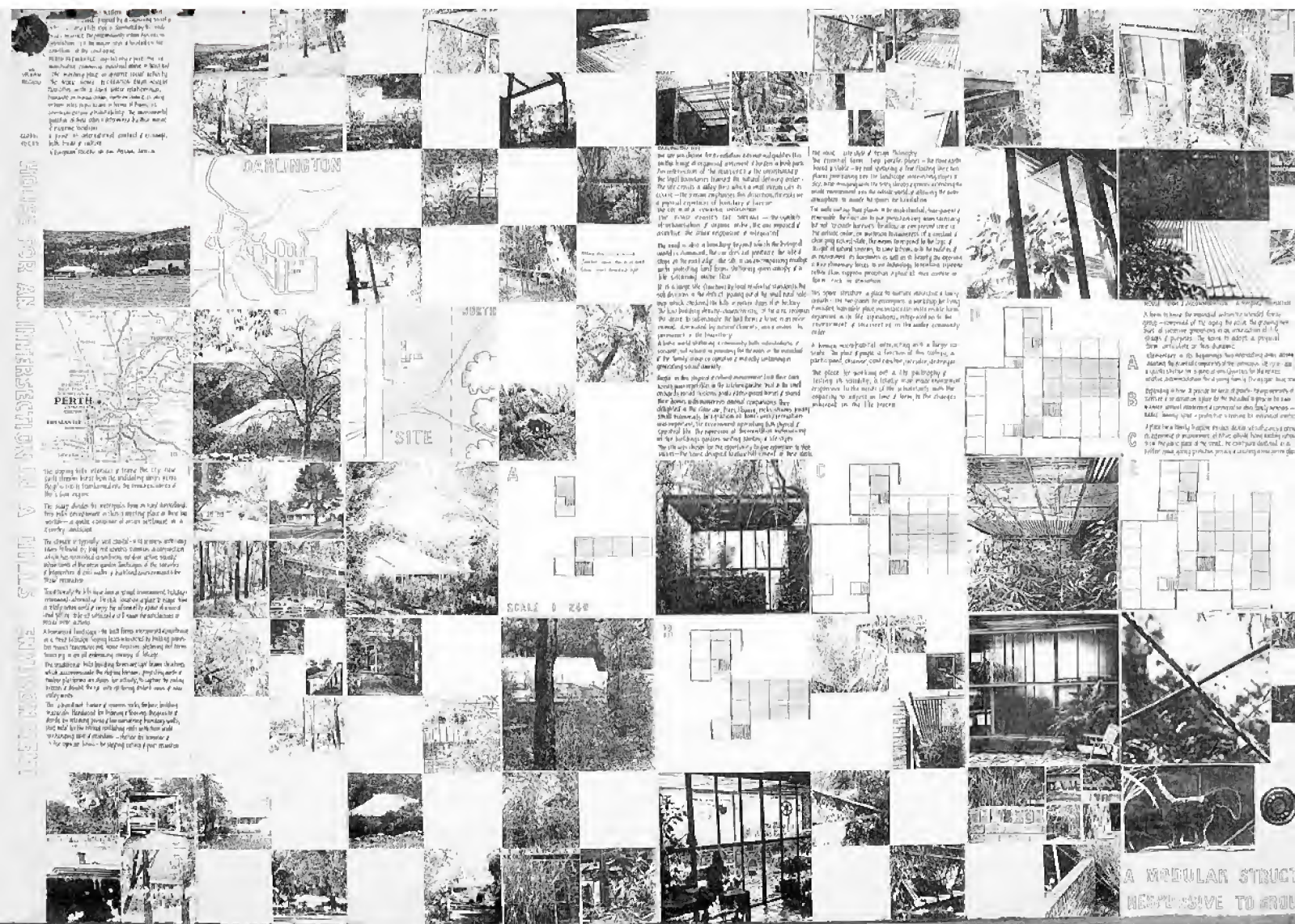
'House for an intersection in a Hills environment' by Duncan and Oline Richards, 1976.

## Further reading

Matthews, Leonie, 'Parochial matters: the writings of Duncan Richards and Oline Richards', *Fabrications* (The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand), 18 (1), 2008, pp.25–39.

Richards' Writing Collection, Department of Architecture and Interior Architecture, School of Built Environment, Curtin University: a full catalogue of Oline Richards' publications and writings is included on the accompanying website [www.distantvoices.org.au](http://www.distantvoices.org.au)

Leonie Matthews is a Lecturer in the Department of Architecture and Interior Architecture at Curtin University and a Director of Matthews McDonald Architects. Her research interests include Western Australian architectural history and she is currently undertaking a PhD at the University of Western Australia 'Lure of the Hills: self and writing architectural history'.







Atlanta Veld

## *Look Here! The environmental photography of Kurt Veld*

Latvian-born photographer Kurt Veld (1931–2011) enjoyed a significant career in advertising, including a striking environmental photo essay for John Button's edited book *Look Here!* (1968).

My father was the photographer Kurt Veld. Amongst a significant career in advertising specialising in fashion and architectural photography, his environmental images form a small yet compelling output. These include his grainy black and white photographs taken for the book *Look Here!* and striking close-up digital images of trees taken in the years just before his death in 2011.

When Kurt was involved in bringing *Look Here!* to fruition, I was not even a twinkle in my parents' eyes and some of his most accomplished photographic advertising work was yet to come. The dad of my formative years was a farmer and chef with a hobby farm in the hills behind Lorne who drove a tractor, grew strawberries, and made bouillabaisse and crêpes suzette that were to die for. So I find myself part biographer/part historian in discovering this enigmatic character of the 1960s advertising world.

*Look Here! Considering the Australian environment* (1968) had its genesis in a lecture series held under the auspices of the left-leaning Australian Fabian Society, featuring some of the most influential voices

Kurt Veld's late career images focussed on trees and their bark, with this disfigured Perth eucalypt linking nature and culture in an oddly poetic yet disturbingly ominous manner.

Photograph: Kurt Veld



# KURT VELD

in Australian arts and letters: critic Robin Boyd, architects Daryl Jackson and David Saunders, town planners John Bayly and Fred Ledger, designers Grant Featherston and R. Haughton James, writers Stephen Murray-Smith and George Johnston, and naturalist Vincent Serventy. Cross linkages through social, political, and artistic circles gave the group an impressive cohesion and vitality.

This was an era of rapid change and these lectures articulated a new way forward. The lectures were held in ballroom of the Southern Cross Hotel, Melbourne's new foray into the international world of luxury accommodation. Race Matthews, honorary secretary of the Australian Fabian Society, recalled Boyd's lecture: 'The hotel's managers were very proud of the ballroom which was lined with mirrors which had gilt sunbursts in the middle of each one. When Robin was speaking he waved at the sunbursts and referred to them as excrescences and the managers were so offended they wanted to cancel the two subsequent lectures but were talked out of it.

Melbourne lawyer John Button edited the lectures for publication, a handsome volume by F.W. Cheshire. The biographical notices at the back of *Look Here!* attest to this dazzling array of talent, yet for the photographer whose fitting pictures 'paint

a thousand words' to accompany the text, there is but a passing credit to their authorship—simple, understated, innocuous, humble. Yet to many that met him in his heyday, Kurt Veld was far from any of these. His loquacious and flamboyant demeanour made him stand him out from the crowd and he attracted many high fliers and influential individuals, John Button being one of them.

When they met, Button was still to carve his name into the history of Australian politics and perhaps their friendship and collaboration for *Look Here!* contributed in some way to the paths they took from that point. John and Kurt were great mates—my dad always referred to him as Johnny, with the comfortable familiarity of an old friend. Together with designer Bruce Weatherhead, the trio embarked on what would be a three-month photographic field trip for the book, taking in all parts of Victoria and possibly parts of South Australia and New South Wales.

A trademark of my father's work (and archives, sadly) which may confound the *Look Here!* reader, is an unashamed lack of titles for the photos. I have no doubt this was quite intentional, questioning the reader to critically ponder the narrative while viewing each photo intuitively, perhaps even to evoke familiarity ('haven't I seen that place



Kurt Veld's Lennox Street studio in the inner Melbourne suburb of Richmond was the centre of his photographic and social life. Two unnamed colleagues with Kurt Veld (right) in the studio, perfectly evoking the late sixties era of the *Look Here!* project.





before?'). The reader is encouraged to look with fresh eyes at the world just outside the window of the car, home, or office, one reason the book was so important for its time.

My mother Kersti is of the opinion that Kurt carried no vestige of tree-hugging greenie within him when he set out on the road trip to photograph for the book. However I have since discovered that my father held close counsel about many personal inclinations in an effort to avoid her wrath or ridicule. I know that despite my mother vowing he was

a capitalist (I believe because he liked to splurge lavishly on his friends and clients, food for her wrath and ridicule no doubt), the legacy he passed to me was more liberal socialist. Maybe *Look Here!* challenged my father to revisit the ethical basis of his work in advertising and question his legacy.

At the same time *Look Here!* was published, Kurt had just bought a property, Allenvale Farm, at the back of Lorne. Perhaps this seemingly impulsive acquisition by an advertising executive with career in full flight, came out of the time he shared with

The photo essay by Kurt Veld for John Button's book *Look Here!* produced a memorable series of grainy black and white images, reflecting his predilection for the versatile 35mm film format and a love of powerful, wordless imagery.



Button and Weatherhead on their field trip, inspired by the zeitgeist of the project. Unfortunately the only artwork that has remained in the Veld archive from this time is a sheet negative of Melbourne's Bourke Street Mall, an image of an architect's plan and not even one of Kurt's own photographs.

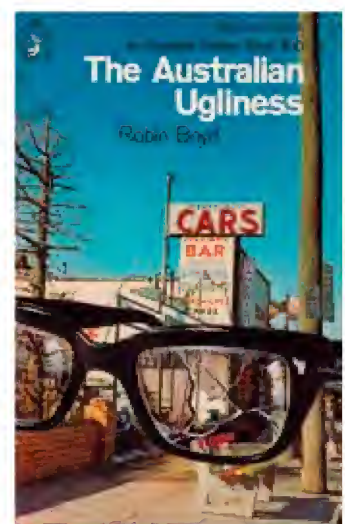
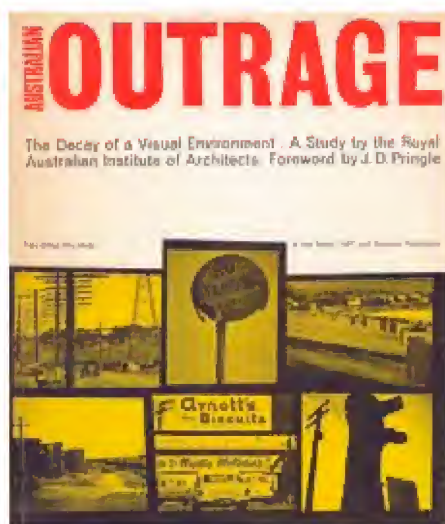
This disappointing lack of documentation is, however, compensated by a wealth of contextual evidence. *Look Here!* was published just as many Australian (and indeed, many people globally) were questioning the wisdom of unfettered resource exploitation and other aspects of modernism. In garden terms this new environmentalism filtered down through bush gardens, a new interest in sensitive site planning, retention of mature trees, and the embrace of new natural parks and reserves. Robin Boyd's prescient critique of this period, *The Australian Ugliness* (1960), memorably evoked the spectre of 'arboraphobia'.

Less than four years after *Look Here!* had been published, the seed of Kurt Veld's last photographic project *Trees*—which opened at the Albany branch of the Western Australian Museum just days before his death—had been firmly sown in New Zealand (where I was born). A copywriter friend he was working with in Wellington, penned these words—a personal environmental manifesto—which was the inspiration for my father's 'last assignment':

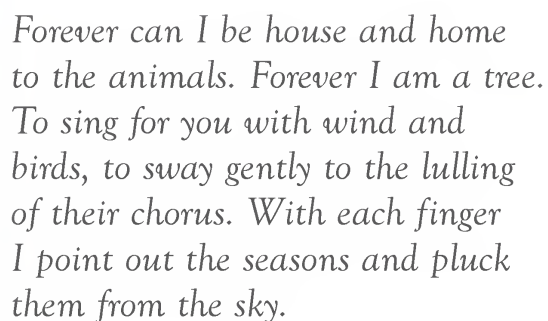
*'Testimonial on behalf of a giant who can't speak for himself.'*

*Forever should I stand, undaunted  
and untroubled by those who seek  
shelter beneath my mottled coat.*

*Silent Spring* (1962),  
*Australian Outrage*  
(1966), *Designing  
Australian Bush Gardens*  
(1966), *The Australian  
Ugliness* (1960;  
paperback 1968), *Look  
Here!* (1968), *Design with  
Nature* (1969), and *Living  
and Partly Living* (1971),  
a mix of American,  
British, and local titles,  
all captured the zeitgeist  
of an environmental  
awakening in Australia  
during the 1960s.







The project homes of Merchant Builders were marketed using bold imagery and graphics that drew on the skills of Australia's foremost photographers of the 1960s and 1970s, including Kurt Veld and Harry Sowden.

*I beare you fruit and seeds made  
from rain washed wisdom. my  
wooden toes bind the earth together  
for your feet. Just as the soil of all  
the earth is my fill, Nature's nectar  
my drink. I ask nothing but to live  
a long life.*

### Further reading

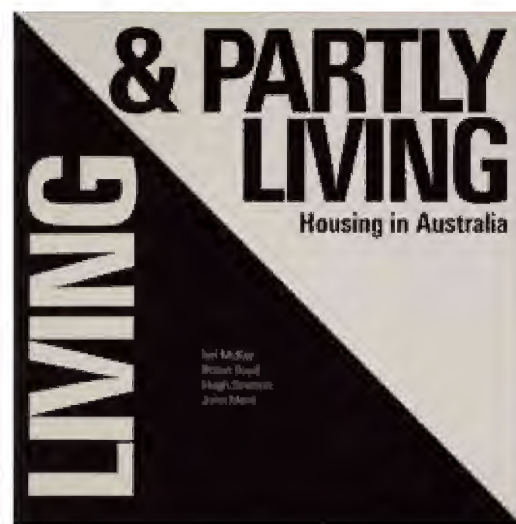
Anya-Petrivna, Elizabeth, *Mannequin: models, Melbourne fashion, 1950s–60s*, National Trust of Australia, Melbourne, 2011.

Button, John, *Look Here! Considering the Australian environment*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1968.

Mendez, Torrance, "[Obituary] Kurt Veld, fashion and art photographer; Born: Latvia, 1931; Died: Albany, aged 80', *The West Australian*, 7 July 2011, p.41.

Thanks to Dr Race Mathews for permission to quote from his reminiscences of the Fabian lectures.

**Atlanta Veld** is lives and works in Albany, WA.







Caroline Grant

## *Tree advocacy: a possible role for the Australian Garden History Society*

Northern side of Perth's Sawpit Gully, looking east through trees towards the scarp; to the left is open grazing land, to be subdivided as part of the Annie's Landing village in Ellenbrook. This is to incorporate a designed landscape inspired by traditional towns and communities in the region such as Guildford, Beverley, and Toodyay.

Drawing: Peteris Ciemitis

**Advocacy for trees as part of our designed landscapes is vital, yet complex issues mean that effective action is often difficult to achieve.**

The Australian Garden History Society promotes knowledge of significant historic gardens and cultural landscapes. One way it does this is as an advocate for research into gardens and gardening in a wide social, historic, literary, artistic, and scientific context. It can be a cumbersome task for the Society, with less than 2000 volunteer members spread throughout Australia, to advocate effectively for gardens. During my recent term

on the National Management Committee, however, I was encouraged at how often well written, well informed letters followed up by a consistent presence at public meetings or in the legal tribunals yielded positive results. The conservation of the Avenue of Honour at Bacchus Marsh in Victoria (subject to a road-widening proposal) was an impressive achievement. Cooperation with like-minded organisations such as the National Trust ([nationaltrust.org.au](http://nationaltrust.org.au)) and Treenet ([treenet.com.au](http://treenet.com.au)), which has an Avenues of Honour project, can enhance effective results.

The rapid loss of urban trees was the most pressing factor motivating the AGHS Tree Forum



'The Urban Forest: trees past, present and future' held in Perth on 10 May 2013. The perceived causes of tree loss were various, but in Western Australia included population growth due to the mining boom and pressure for trees to make way for buildings and roads. Many participants were aware that houses were becoming larger while block sizes were shrinking, and that old 'brownfield' sites were being built over with large amounts of concrete and questionable provision for retaining older trees or providing new trees.

Artist and planner Peter Ciemitis revealed other drivers for change in his Forum paper. These included social changes such as a preference for larger homes with less focus on gardening and more on entertaining, and children spending more time indoors instead of in the garden, the street or at the park. Blocks of land containing brick houses on concrete pads occupying most of the site leave little space for a garden which can accommodate a slope and some trees, so the skills required to develop sloping blocks are being lost. Industry responses include the removal of trees in order to flatten contours and thus to provide level house sites. A perception on the part of insurance companies of risk posed by trees may also be inhibiting inclusion of trees in the built environment.

Peter Ciemitis suggested a number of strategies that may provide opportunities for an improved urban forest. These included strata titles to promote more flexible housing design, lightweight housing to avoid benching, a more iterative design process, and research on defining actual risk to inform insurance policies. Lastly he suggested 'getting trees back into people's hearts'. Many of these issues echo around Australia's capital cities and urban areas, each requiring slightly different responses.

At the Australia ICOMOS conference in Canberra in November 2013, issues raised included concern for the forested water catchments surrounding our cities, contested views of cultural identity as seen through past tree planting schemes, and the agricultural landscapes that provide our food. There was an appetite for raising awareness about landscape conservation but nobody seemed to have a clear plan of how to proceed.

I believe there is a role for the AGHS in writing the history of tree planting in Australia, bringing the story to the present, and looking to the future. Cities rely on resources beyond the metropolitan boundary. This is especially true for water catchments, which for most Australian cities consist of very large forested areas including large

old trees that play a role in purifying our water supplies as well as providing important habitats. Urban places also rely on agriculture which itself relies on healthy water catchments.

It is time to treat trees as essential green infrastructure and call for planning decisions to place trees and remnant bushland front and centre of the planning process. Making adequate provision for appropriate landscape design, fire-resistant housing, and emergency retreat from bushfire-prone areas is a concomitant requirement. In order to achieve this, substantial research needs to be undertaken.

Trees are essential to human existence. This seems so obvious that it should not need stating yet in our cities their less attractive attributes such as roots in drains, their ability to lift footpaths and roads, the dropping of limbs, and the ongoing expense of maintenance can become the main game in local politics. But as recently demonstrated by Greg Moore in the September 2013 issue of *Gardening Australia*, the economic benefits of the urban forest—relative to cost—are enormous.

Writing the history of planting and use of trees for amenity in streets and parks, and the reasons for their success or failure—cultural and biological—would be very beneficial. The humble Queensland box tree (*Lophostemon confertus*) has had its detractors, but it may be one of the most widely used street trees in Australia and it has its admirers, too. As the practice of placing power cables underground increases street tree choice, it remains to be seen which will thrive and where.

Another initial step might be to form a working group to consolidate existing research and initiate new avenues of enquiry. We could easily create a notice board and reading list on street and amenity tree history. This might be posted on the AGHS website, so members could respond. A session dedicated to trees at the annual national conference, or a special national tree-based event would also be highly desirable. Many AGHS members have a firm grasp of wider issues such as species biodiversity that could complement and extend our interest in the cultural history of trees. We could ensure that we have a presence at the annual Treenet symposium. Then we could move beyond urban trees and metropolitan fences into the landscape beyond.

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**Caroline Grant** is a landscape architect currently writing a PhD at the University of Western Australia on the cultural landscape of the Albany region.



# Museum musings

## Every gardener wants a medal: small treasures from The Old Mole Collection

Caroline Berlyn

Among the many hundreds of gardening tools and implements donated to Carrick Hill by Richard Bird (aka The Old Mole) of Armidale, NSW, are some small and unexpected treasures in the form of three presentation medals.

Gardening awards come in all shapes and sizes, but they all tell a story of aspiration, a desire to show off to friends and fellow gardeners the fruits of concerted effort. Secretly, all gardeners who decide to show or exhibit their passion want to win a prize. Secretly, gardeners who decide to show or exhibit their passion must surely want to win a medal. From the many small growers, producers, and manufacturers who participated in The Great Exhibition in 1851 at London's innovative Crystal Palace building and at Sydney's 1879 Garden Palace Exhibition, through to Wes Fleming's RHS Best in Show Chelsea Anniversary Gold Medal in 2013, gardeners have long wanted the tangible thrill of a medal or trophy as acknowledgment of their skill, and a humble certificate is just not the same!

In the last issue of *Australian Garden History*, Richard Heathcote wrote about progress in the development of the proposed Australian Museum of Gardening at Carrick Hill in Adelaide. The Old Mole Collection includes three twentieth-century horticultural presentation medals.

This first example is a boxed British-made bronze medal, presented to a Mr J.R. Iddon by *Amateur Gardening*, dating from the 1920s or 1930s. *Amateur Gardening* was—and still is—a well-known British gardening magazine founded in 1884 by (James) Shirley Hibbard (1825–1890). With many notable contributors, it is the longest running UK amateur gardening weekly in publication and is currently Britain's best-selling magazine in that category. The obverse (or principal face) of this medal features a symbolic, classically robed figure representing the seated goddess of Flora being approached by a male gardener who holds a basket of bountiful produce. The reverse has a cast inscription: 'Presented by Amateur Gardening/For Merit in Agriculture'. The winner's name has not been engraved onto the medal but it has been carefully written in black ink on the inner lid of the box.

*Gardening, like most other arts, has had its origin in the supply of a primitive want, and, as wants became desires, and desires increased, and became more luxurious, and refined, its province became extended.*

J.C. Loudon, *Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (1824)



Left: *Amateur Gardening* medal, c.1920s–30s



Right: National Chrysanthemum Society medal, n.d.



The bronze National Chrysanthemum Society medal in the collection is undated and uninscribed but the lovely design of chrysanthemum flowers is quite Japanese in style and the flower heads are beautifully cast in shallow relief. The National Chrysanthemum Society was first set up in London 1884 and the medal's central 'NCS' monogram is still used by the UK organisation and its affiliated societies around the world.

The Smallholder Championship Medal was made by one of Britain's leading medal-making companies, P. Vaughton & Sons in Birmingham, in the 1930s or 1940s. Its pre-World War II design, with an obverse design of two figures—the woman perhaps sowing seeds from the container in her hands onto the fertile soil of their small-holding—and the laurel wreath of success on the reverse perfectly illustrates the romantic ideal of every aspiring self-sufficient gardener.

Gardening success is also a part of Carrick Hill's own history with Ursula Hayward, owner and creator of the original garden layout and plantings, winning several presentation salvers for her home grown orchids and lilies that she exhibited at local Adelaide horticultural shows in the 1960s and 1970s. Ursula was sufficiently wealthy to have had the assistance of professional gardeners, but orchids and lilies were her passion and she



seasonally filled the house with their flowering plants. As an amateur artist she painted them and, with husband Edward 'Bill' Hayward, she acquired many paintings and botanical illustrations by significant Australian and British artists for their growing art collection.

The Old Mole Collection is evocative of gardeners past: with their smooth handles and worn blades, many of the tools have an almost visceral connection to their former owners. The presentation medals described here add another layer of richness to the stories behind the collection of practical tools and gardening implements. Along with a resource library, the Australian Museum of Gardening aims to inspire the gardeners of the future by drawing on stories from the past.

**Caroline Berlyn** is Project Registrar at Carrick Hill in Adelaide. Her long career working as a collections manager and museum registrar and her interests in historical research, object documentation, and gardening have often led to serendipitous discoveries.

*The Advertiser* newspaper's annual award, in the form of a circular, silver-plated presentation tray, was awarded to Lady Hayward three times. Collection Carrick Hill Trust: The Hayward Bequest

Smallholder Championship Medal, c.1930s–40s

Photographs by  
Chris Mangan  
[mangopic.com.au](http://mangopic.com.au)

We are pleased to introduce a new column—Museum musings—to *Australian Garden History*, one that will sit companionably alongside our regular features such as Netscape and Profile. Museum musings will showcase the collections and ambitions of the proposed Australian Museum of Gardening being developed at Carrick Hill. We will have an eye out for the quirky, the overlooked, and the intriguing. The Australian Garden History Society is a history and heritage partner of the Australian Museum of Gardening and our journal welcomes this close link, one that will surely have significant benefits for each organisation.



# For the bookshelf

Alison Bashford & Stuart Macintyre (eds),  
*The Cambridge History of Australia*, Cambridge  
University Press, Port Melbourne, Vic., 2013  
(ISBN 9781107011557): 2 vols, hardback, 1536  
pages, RRP \$325

This new two-volume history of Australia is presented as a coming of age for history making in Australia. While this invites speculation as to how future generations of historians might perceive the current volumes much that distinguishes this publication from earlier comparable national histories are its great strengths.

One of these distinguishing factors is the conscious approach throughout to history as constructed, debated, and non-definitive. Another is the embrace of different ways of understanding the past from the perspective of different historical disciplines. The assemblage of contributors—prominent and established writers on Australian history alongside a new generation of historians—specialising in indigenous studies, feminist history, literary history, environmental studies, economics, political science, and archaeology, enshrines these different vantage points. As the editors point out, this is also ‘national history written in global times’. Many of the chapters reflect recent moves by historians towards transnational histories, with the benefit of revealing patterns that transcend national boundaries and relationships between the local and the global.

The volumes are separated by Federation in 1901, and explore from Australia’s ancient Indigenous past up to this moment in volume 1, and 1901 to the present in volume 2. Each volume, over two parts, adopts a chronological and thematic approach, with the thematic chapters allowing more fine-grained exploration of key topics across the time span of their respective volume.

Each of the chapters reads as a synthesis of a vast array of current historical research on the respective topic. Not to be overlooked are the footnotes which offer rich morsels for study. Dedicated ‘Further reading’ sections also supplement each volume. Perhaps my only criticism is that while handbooks and general surveys of Aboriginal Australia, Australian politics, government, literature and art, religion, people, feminism, law, and sport furnish these sections, curiously absent are the recently published encyclopaedia of Australian architecture (2012) and companion to Australian gardens (2002).

While the entire publication has relevance to readers concerned with or interested in Australia’s history of gardens and designed and cultural landscapes, it is certainly worth singling out the following for their more immediate appeal: in volume 1, ‘Environmental Transformations’ by Andrea Gaynor, ‘Colonial science and technology’ by John Gascoigne and Sara Maroske, and in volume 2, ‘The Environment’ by Gregory Barton and Brett Bennett.

There is much to like here. The resulting volumes remedy a tendency for Australian history to exist in isolation. Tight syntheses of a vast span of current thinking, debates, and tensions about Australian history are lucidly presented. It considers the deep time of Australia’s Aboriginal past: some 50,000 years ago continuing into the present, alongside the vastly shallower timeframe of modern Australia. More than the story of Australia’s past, the historiographical self-consciousness and multiple vantage points make it an absorbing overview of history making in Australia.

**Christina Dyson**

Toby Musgrave (text) & Clay Perry  
(photographs), *Heritage Fruits & Vegetables*,  
Thames & Hudson and the Royal Horticultural  
Society, London, 2012 (ISBN 9780500516133):  
hardback, 224pp, RRP \$76

In Australia we know about heritage plant varieties thanks to the work of nurseries such as the Diggers Club in Victoria and Eden Seeds in Queensland. Others seed cooperatives based regionally also work tirelessly to keep circulating a diversity of vegetable and fruit varieties in Australia. Toby Musgrave, the erudite British garden history writer who recently appeared in Adelaide at The Body in the Garden festival of crime and garden writers, certainly tells us there is a promising outlook. His writing combines history and the cultural mystique surrounding what might have been forbidden fruit and vegetables in the United Kingdom if European bureaucracy had won the day to mandate compulsory and expensive plant variety rights.

This book vibrates both visually and through its text presenting the accomplishments of many cultures in the cultivation of the fruit and vegetables. The splendid colour photographs by Clay Perry seem to take their cue from the sixteenth-century Dutch still life painters with texture and composition achieving uncanny depth.



This handsomely designed volume is the book as an art object in its own right with linen binding, good paper, and classic typography. Raymond Blanc—one of the United Kingdom's most respected French chefs—contributes a foreword establishing the nexus between gardeners and cooks. This appealed and I also appreciated the quick reference chronology dating the introduction of each fruit and vegetable to Britain. This is an armchair gardening gift at once sumptuous and learned.

**Richard Heathcote**  
Director, Carrick Hill

John Charles Ryan, *Green Sense: the aesthetics of plants, place and language*, TrueHeart academic, Oxford, 2012 (ISBN 9780957301702): hardback, 408pp, RRP £55 (available from [www.trueheartpress.co.uk](http://www.trueheartpress.co.uk))

This is a significant new text for Australian garden history as well as for those interested in the wider concerns of environmental history and cultural landscapes. Focussing on the south west of Western Australia—yet drawing Australia-wide and indeed globally for context—*Green Sense* will be read with interest by all who share a lively appreciation of intersections between nature and culture.

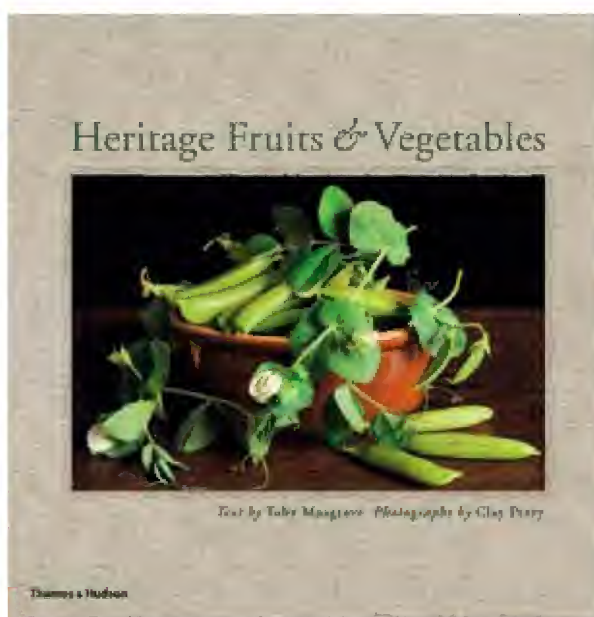
The book's origin as a doctoral thesis makes for occasional heavy going, but the episodic nature of the textual structure (13 parts plus a prologue and coda) mean that rewards are frequent and well worth the achievement of discovery.

Perhaps this is intentional, as the author's background in the United States ensures that *his* discoveries are *our* discoveries.

Collected under the major headings of Restoring sense to plant research, Botanical histories, Botanical cultures, Botanical languages, and Botanical futures, John Ryan charts a highly original path through botany and landscape. Indeed Ryan's penchant for 'gestural walking' means that his paths are at once real and experienced first hand. In such close encounters, stories derived from poetry and science are both valued equally, fusing what in other hands are often seen as disparate narratives.

The author's research traverses far and wide, from the accounts of early European explorers, botanists, and artists, as well as more recent scholarly literature, attested by thought-provoking analysis (and comprehensive bibliography). Ryan's story is divided equally between nature and culture, and it is fitting therefore that the garden is valued as a site for investigation as much as the biodiversity hotspot (of which his chosen region is amongst the richest internationally). The use of indigenous plants in garden settings, the poetic and artistic imagery of cultivated plants, and the continuum of stories from field to fenced are amongst some of the pleasures of this worthy new volume. Scholarship such as this is unusual in the Australian context, and publishers TrueHeart are to be congratulated for this new addition to its Bridging Disciplines Series.

**Richard Aitken**





# Recent releases



Made of papier-mâché then painted and waxed, this broken example clearly demonstrates not only this construction but also the veracity of colouring of this 360-strong collection at Adelaide Botanic Garden.

**John Dowson, *Old Albany: photographs 1850–1950*, Albany Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Inc., Fremantle, WA, 2009 (ISBN 9780980539523): hardback, 272pp, RRP \$49.95**

If you only have one book to prepare for the AGHS Albany conference this is it. With hundreds of beautifully reproduced historical photographs, plans, and other images; complementary descriptive and historical notes; and a brief introduction by Tim Winton, this is a fine tribute to a town proud of its past. Savour and anticipate!

**Peter Freeman, *The Wallpapered Manse: the rescue of an endangered house*, The Watermark Press, Boorowa, NSW, 2013 (ISBN 9780992315603): paperback, 168pp, RRP \$49.95**

This is a model publication linking local history with broader regional concerns, the specificity of place with wider context, and individual personal and historical stories with those of the local community. Aided by evocative images, the author's beguiling sketches, and an unfolding text, we trace the history of the former Moruya Presbyterian manse, on the south coast of New South Wales, and its sensitive conservation under the Endangered Houses Fund of the Historic Houses Trust of NSW. Anyone who has renovated a period home and garden will immediately identify with this story and yearn to produce so eloquent a record.

**Tony Kanellos, *Imitation of Life: a visual catalogue of the 19th century fruit models in the Santos Museum of Economic Botany in the Adelaide Botanic Garden, a collection of papier mâché models made by Heinrich Arnoldi & Co. Gotha, Germany (1856–1899)*, Board of the Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium, Adelaide, 2013 (ISBN 9780980702163): hardback, 384 pp, RRP \$69**

With thoroughness commensurate with its subject, the title says it all in this engaging story documenting a remarkable collection (commenced under the directorship of Richard Schomburgk and continued by his successor Maurice Holtze, pomological enthusiasts both). These models now form a rare and outstanding surviving collection demonstrating the diversity of fruit varieties in the nineteenth century. Large format images combine with a well-researched introduction to form a publication of lasting value and great beauty.

**Helen O'Neill, *A Singular Vision: Harry Seidler*, HarperCollins Publishers, Sydney, 2013 (ISBN 9780732296742): hardback with demi-slipcase, 384pp, RRP \$49.99**

Architect Harry Seidler (1923–2006) had a profound impact on Australian architecture. His arrival in Australia in 1948, the early *succès de scandale* surrounding his Rose Seidler House, marriage to the young Penelope Evatt, his high-rise apartments (such as Blues Point Tower), and the powerful vision of Sydney's Australia Square are all well known. Seidler's command of functional planning was international in its genesis yet relatively unusual by contemporary Australian standards: one guest to a 1950 open day at the Seidler's house—thinking he was proceeding through an opening to the back yard—walked straight into a glass wall. Seidler himself was an obsessive documenter and promoter and his oeuvre verged on the preternatural, making him an ideal candidate for a biography. Handsomely produced and written with the cooperation of the Seidler and Evatt families and of colleagues at Seidler & Associates, O'Neill works systematically and sympathetically through veritable mountains of documentation and reminiscence yielding much that is new, all told in a lively conversational style. Although there is little here on gardens, Seidler's impact on functional architectural modernism and urbanism in Australia mean that we ignore his contribution to debates about our designed environment and its heritage at our peril.



# Dialogue

## The Tree Project

A well-attended launch event at Whittlesea on 30 November 2013 celebrated the creation of the Blacksmiths' Tree. Intended as a memorial to those affected by Victoria's tragic 2009 Black Saturday bushfires, the sculpted tree is composed of metal leaves, nuts, and flowers forged by blacksmiths around the world. Once the tree is dedicated in its intended resting place at Strathewen, we hope to report again on this remarkable community project.

[www.treeproject.abavic.org.au](http://www.treeproject.abavic.org.au)

## Mavis Batey MBE and Veitch Memorial Medallist (1921–2013)

We record with sadness the death of Mavis Batey, doyenne of the British garden history world. A remarkable career in code breaking during the Second World War and love of literature (see numerous obituaries, including *The Telegraph*, 13 November 2013) perfectly equipped her with the incisive skills so necessary in historical enquiry. Deeply involved with the Garden History Society from its commencement in the 1960s, and a long-time honorary secretary and president, her 75th birthday was marked with a special issue of *Garden History*, 24 (1), 1996, providing a rich context for her areas of special interest—conservation, the literature of the garden, Romanticism and the Picturesque, and her beloved Oxfordshire—and a useful list of her writings. Her contribution to garden history has been profound.

I had the good fortune to meet Mavis Batey in 1996 when she showed a small group over the garden at West Dean House and we shared our mutual delight in the pleasure of collecting books by William Gilpin. Batey's writings have been an inspiration—*Regency Gardens* (1995) clarified in my own mind the special qualities of the period between the English landscape garden and the Gardenesque (see AGH, 8 (6), 1997, p.18); *Jane Austen and the English Landscape* (1996) showed me ways of integrating images, texts, and social history; her article 'The Picturesque: an overview' in *Garden History*, 22 (2), 1994, is a masterly introduction to a critical movement in garden design; while her co-authored book (with David Lambert) *The English Garden Tour* (1990) has been a companionable guide on many tours of discovery.

**Richard Aitken**

## Botanical library at Australind: The Marion Blackwell Collection

Readers will be interested to know—reports the Wildlife Society of Western Australia—that a substantial collection of books relevant to Western Australian flora is now available for consultation at the Australind Public Library. The collection was built up over a number of years and presented to the Library by an anonymous donor. It is to be named in honour of Marion Blackwell AM, whose contribution to botany, horticulture, and landscape design in Western Australia, has been enormous.



Launching the Blacksmiths' Tree during a community day at Whittlesea in November 2013  
Photos: Richard Aitken





Guest speaker Damon Young at The Body in the Garden festival

The Collection contains more than 200 titles, including standard local, state, and national floras, a special emphasis on orchids, and wider literature such as books and reports by Charles Darwin, Ferdinand von Mueller, and Frederick Manson Bailey. The Collection is maintained as a closed reserve collection available for consultation by appointment (email: [astaff@harvey.wa.gov.au](mailto:astaff@harvey.wa.gov.au)).

## The Body in the Garden

A good sprinkling of AGHS members was observed at The Body in the Garden, the inaugural South Australian crime and garden writers' festival held in Adelaide in October 2013. Penelope Curtin, one of the festival's directors explained to us that the genesis of the festival lay in two completely unrelated factors. First of all, in the directors' experience, crime books and garden books are the two most popular genres and they therefore they considered it would be challenging and interesting to combine these two in a single event, with two seemingly different categories of writers performing alongside one another and searching for correspondences in their writing. And, secondly, they wanted to attract a different audience to a literary festival.

The participating writers and the audience—over a thousand for the weekend—were unanimous in their praise for the festival: they loved the quirky combination of writers, they loved encountering new writers, and they loved the way garden and crime writers were combined. But above all they loved the location of the festival, in the Adelaide Botanic Garden. Also there were unanimous were calls for a reprise in 2014!

And for those who missed out, look at [www.thebodyinthegarden.com.au](http://www.thebodyinthegarden.com.au) for details of the program and participating writers.

## Award for history of Australian landscape architecture

Congratulations to Andrew Saniga recently awarded the Medal for Landscape Architecture in the 2013 AILA Victorian Landscape Architecture Awards for his book *Making Landscape Architecture in Australia* (reviewed in *AGH*, 24 (4), 2013, p.28). The jury commended this history as 'a remarkable act of recovery' that unraveled 'the often rich and complex story as a continuous, sequential and complete account'. In congratulating the author, the jury noted that the book forms an 'impressive and invaluable contribution to the academic and professional discourse on landscape architecture'.

## Vale Stuart Rattle

We note with sadness the recent death of Stuart Rattle, AGHS member, speaker at the Society's annual national conference at Ballarat in 2012, and always a gracious host on open days at his beautiful garden, Musk Farm (near Daylesford in Central Victoria). He was an especially active member of Wombat Hill Botanic Gardens Friends in Daylesford, generously donating the proceeds of his Musk Farm open days (including the visit by Ballarat conference delegates) to the conservation of this highly significant botanic garden (which has just celebrated its 150th anniversary). Stuart Rattle had immense passion for gardens, garden making, and garden history.

# AGHS News

## National Management Committee

At the annual general meeting, held in Armidale on 20 October 2013, elected members Trisha Burkitt, John Dwyer, John Viska, and Lynne Walker reached the end of their respective terms and were farewelled from the committee. As each of the members had served their maximum six-year term, this represents almost a quarter of a century of experience. Our patron Sue Ebury wrote eloquently of John Dwyer's service following the end his chairmanship (see *AGH*, 24 (3), 2013, p.28) and to each of this quartet it now remains to recall outstanding service to the committee and to the Society. Each member will be recalled for different expertise: Trisha Burkitt for her wide knowledge

of our members and their interests, John Dwyer for his long experience in conservation advocacy, John Viska for his engaging and knowledgeable embrace of garden history in its widest sphere, and Lynne Walker for her outstanding work promoting the Society, and more recently for her dual role as conference convenor.

Four nominations were received for the position of elected members and as these filled the four vacant positions, Roslyn Burge, Jess Hood, Elaine Lawson, and Ruth Morgan were duly elected. Each of these new members brings freshness and valued expertise to the NMC and their enthusiasm augers well for smooth renewal of the committee. Ruth Morgan is profiled in this issue and remaining



NMC members will be subject of forthcoming profile articles.

Several changes to the NMC membership have also occurred by the ratification of new state representatives for South Australia (Richard Heathcote replacing Richard Nolan) and Western Australia (Carmel O'Halloran replacing Caroline Grant). Richard and Caroline have each been long-serving representatives, and our thanks go to each for their service to the committee.

## 2014 AGHS annual national conference

Preparations are well underway for the 2014 AGHS annual national conference, to be based in Albany, WA. Running from Friday to Sunday, 17 to 19 October 2014 (with an optional day on Monday, 20 October 2014), the conference will also feature a pre- and post-conference tour. The conference registration brochure will be mailed with the next issue of *Australian Garden History*, at the start of April 2014. The committee expects the conference to be fully subscribed, and the ballot system that applied to the 2013 Armidale conference will also be utilised in this case.

## Editorial Advisory Committee

The National Management Committee recently nominated new guidelines for the EAC. These strengthen links with the NMC; provide enhanced certainty in the responsibilities of the editors, the NMC, and EAC; and streamline operation of the EAC. Coupled with this change, the committee membership has been refreshed by the retirement of Timothy Hubbard, Prue Slatyer, and John Viska, and their replacement by Ros Burge, Julie Collins, and Ruth Morgan. We thank each of the outgoing members for their service and look forward to an injection of new vitality from the incoming members. Roslyn Burge was also nominated as the new EAC convenor. Outgoing convenor Christine Reid is to stay on the committee for a year to ensure a smooth transition. At the most recent EAC meeting, held on 2 December 2013, the co-editors expressed their gratitude to Chris for her steadfast support and wise counsel. Her long journalistic experience and wide knowledge of the AGHS membership has been invaluable in charting a clear and purposeful course for *Australian Garden History*.

## AGHS advocacy

A state-sponsored road tunnel project in Melbourne—the proposed East West Link (western section)—threatens to have major, adverse impacts on the significant cultural landscape of Royal Park, Parkville. The AGHS has objected to the proposal on the basis of these unacceptable consequences,

its poor consideration of the significance of Royal Park, and the vagueness of its plans to minimise or manage those impacts. See pages 35–36 of this issue of AGH for a more detailed report.

## South American tours, Sept–Oct 2014

Members wanting to tour some of the world's most spectacular gardens and landscapes are being spoilt for choice in 2014 with Warwick Forge's ALC Garden Tours now working in conjunction with the AGHS to offer his South American Garden Tour to members. The 'Gardens Tour' will cover Chile, Rio de Janeiro, Iguassu Falls, and Buenos Aires with special focus on the amazing gardens of Roberto Burle Marx and Juan Grimm. There are also optional tours to Peru and a new tour to Colombia. Almost all properties are private and accessed only via contacts made over many years. For more information: [warwick@bloomings.com.au](mailto:warwick@bloomings.com.au) or (03) 9804 8915

## Tour to Sicily

The 2014 tour to Sicily booked out quickly. For those on the waiting list and still enquiring, there will be another similar tour in June 2015 (Friday 5–Monday 15 June 2015). To register interest please contact Phoebe LaGerche-Wijsman on [info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au](mailto:info@gardenhistorysociety.org.au) or Trisha on [trishadixon@bigpond.com](mailto:trishadixon@bigpond.com)



Analysis of impacts on the significant landscape of Royal Park from the proposed East West Link: the red represents areas affected by the surface connections of the proposed tunnel; the yellow, wider areas of severe impact; and ochre, flyover sections.

Reproduced from the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, Position Statement on East West Link (Stage One), 31 July 2013



# Conference report

## 'Gardens with Altitude': some personal reflections

Jill Wran

Australian poet Judith Wright's words formed the theme of the Australian Garden History Society's 34th annual national conference—'Gardens with Altitude: The high lean country of New England'—held in Armidale, NSW, 18–21 October 2013, with visits to gardens throughout the New England region.

Encompassing a distinctive and varied geology and altitude, the New England region's rich natural biodiversity is augmented by a cultural landscape of multi-layered Aboriginal and European histories. Many of the contours of this landscape were revealed to conference participants over the four days through the programme of papers and visits to local gardens, homesteads and stations, and World Heritage listed national parks.

Meredith McKinney provided a singularly poetic and richly evocative introduction. Reciting 'South of My Days' by New England born poet Judith Wright (1915–2000) she brought her mother's legacy alive for us. Yet it is her own voice that will live in our memories and mark the Circle of our days.

'Shakkei' (a Japanese concept) is a beautiful new take on the idea of 'the borrowed landscape' and every gardener present surely relished the idea cultivated by Judith Wright that as we complete our own Circle we might shamelessly retire our tools in the sweet surety that 'the landscape is my garden'.

From geographer Robert Haworth we learned the Armidale township is blessed with 'trap soils' as distinct from and indeed combining the best of other possibilities, notably granite, basalt, and alluvial deposits—none in the Sydney region, regrettably. This was surely the soil enriching the immaculate and species-rich town gardens we visited, including **Eynsford**, **Yarrobindi II**, and **Glenlea**. Of course even rank amateurs like me learn very quickly that sweetening the soil is the solution to almost everything and I'm encouraged by Robert's talk to plant more hawthorns instead of applying lime though I worry that winters in the Yarralong Valley are not all that cold.

Seventeen frosts in a row at about minus two happen at my own garden at Jumjum in the Central Coast region of New South Wales, but the statistic of 70 frosts per winter in the dry cold of

The New England hills—captured here in the painting Bundarra Road in Spring by Isabelle Devos—were a powerful, ever-present backdrop to the recent AGHS annual national conference in Armidale, NSW, which, over four days, traversed the rich colours, textures, and contours of the region's cultural landscapes and people.

Isabelle Devos

[www.isabelledevosartist.blogspot.com.au](http://www.isabelledevosartist.blogspot.com.au)



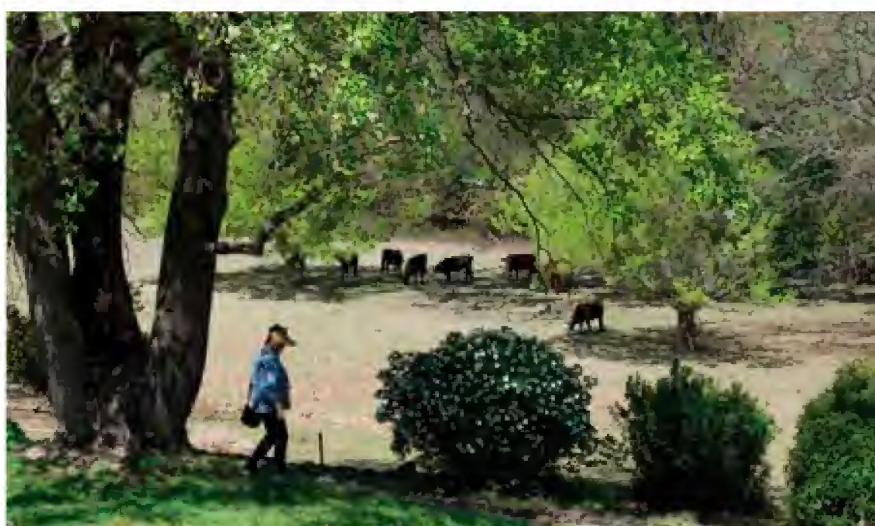


New England is altogether extreme. And it wasn't hard to sympathise about 'out of season cold snaps' when we experienced two big frosty nights and some surprisingly cold spasms during the first two days of the conference. As we got to know each other better and ventured into the countryside things, as you'd expect, began to warm up!

A number of my forebears settled in southwest Queensland and I've long thought Allan Cunningham rather unsung among the band of Australian explorers. Ian Telford delighted me with his emphasis on Cunningham's plant collecting in the 1820s near Wallangarra, including a list of darling plants he gathered like *Xerochrysum*/*Helichrysum*, the yellow everlasting daisy. (See *AGH*, 24 (3), 2013, pp.10–12 for more on *Xerochrysum* by Ian Telford.) Ian's discussion of the work of other plant collectors of note such as Charles Stuart (1802–1877) and Alexander Crawford (1840–1912) came with the wonderful revelation that Joyce Vickery (1908–1979) and her pal Lilian Fraser (1908–1987) collected species at Barrington Tops (in the nearby Hunter Valley region). What's more, the feisty Vickery declined a job in the National Herbarium because she was offered a lower salary than would have obtained had she been male. Happily she stood her ground, the Herbarium gave way, and Joyce made her own kind of history working with grasses.

My father grew up on the Darling Downs and when he returned from WWII to live in Sydney, at Pymble, dreamed of a business growing bush orchids. I was fascinated to learn the uses of cymbidiums and other native plants from Karen Potter, particularly for healing all kinds of ailments, and to glean some understanding of the great work the Ngorabul people are doing to ensure the security of the natural and cultural landscape together with traditional skills and knowledge that otherwise might be lost. On the 4500 acres of their traditional lands which the Ngorabul people own and manage near Glen Innes, the traditional owners are collecting seeds and plants, propagating species for food and medicine, protecting its biodiversity, and promoting conservation values.

Jillian Oppenheimer discussed the cultural and landscape history of the region by showing that changes in housing stock reflected changing security of title and ownership. In the 1840s it began with bark huts; only from the 1890s onwards were second and third generation settlers able to build aspirational and significant homesteads and gardens. We saw this exemplified at a number of the properties visited during the conference—**Bona Vista**, **Travenna**, **Saumarez**



**Homestead, Gostwyck Station, Palmerston, Chevy Chase, the Ollera Station** homestead—with perhaps **Salisbury Court** (built in the 1840s) one exception.

So we learned: that the Scots came ahead of the Poms—hence an early and to some extent continuing insistence on calling the area not New England but New Caledonia; that the Dangars (of Gostwyck and Palmerston), Dumeresqs (of Saumarez), et. al., colonised the New England region, many from the Hunter. They may have had no title but by God they planted trees! That was the decisive thing! That's how they claimed the landscape. And how we come to glory in all those grand oaks and elms. No one who has seen it can forget the elm-lined entrance to Gostwyck, nor it's Decargee Woolshed that came later, certainly with title. Equally impressive were the trees that formed the foundations of the gardens at **Stonehenge**, **Ben Lomond**, and Ollera stations.

Central to settlement in the New England region, as elsewhere, was the civilising influence of women. In her outstanding presentation Marilyn Pidgeon

The setting of the garden in the New England landscape featured strongly in our visits, including Palmerston (top) and Gostwyck (bottom).

Photographs: Christina Dyson





Conference delegates at  
Salisbury Court.  
Photograph: Christina Dyson

showed us some wonderful old photographs of potted gardens on cottage verandahs made 'before there was money, time or even water'. English women on ships brought wet bundles of British plants and English visions of an arcadian landscape including, curiously, the ha-ha. It is this above all elements of garden design which allows a powerful sense of place and became, perhaps for that reason, a pre-eminent aspect of early Australian garden design. A day later Sir Owen Croft invited us to view arguably one of the first examples of a ha-ha in Australia at Salisbury Court dating from 1844.

At Ollera Station the influence of women was apparent in the lush and extensive garden, yet also in the Ollera church (St Bartholomew's) designed by Horbury Hunt in 1876 where some of the decorative interior timber panels had been carved by women. At Saumarez Homestead I felt the joy of Mary White in her part of the garden, the respite it represented 'from the presence and priorities of the family'. This, it seems, is a timeless mode of survival for women. Meanwhile the White family's bequest of **Booloominbah** after 1933 for tertiary education established Armidale as a centre of progress in the study of climate, soils, and land management. As a former member of the council of the University of New England I trust this focus will always be the force of the institution.

Other papers by historian and local heritage advisor Graham Wilson and director of the Heritage Centre and UNE archivist Bill Oates presented wonderful examples of how to extract the most from some of the archival tools available to researchers of historic gardens and cultural landscapes. Graham Wilson's fine, detailed, and gently pithy knowledge revealed to us the history of region, its families, houses, gardens, and social mores through the work of early artists and photographers. Bill Oates pointed up the

anomaly that for all the sophistication of tools such as geotagging and GPS, the fisheye lens panoramas made in the 1920s as a means of recording landscape (and perfected by the McBurnie Sydney studio) remain uniquely advanced.

Stuart Read mapped the waves of fashion and other influences, which have resulted in New Zealand plants making an entrance and remaining popular in Australian gardens. Liz Chappell asked all the questions I try to eschew as I push each load of cow manure or mulch uphill. Notably, what becomes of old gardens and their stories when their owners grow old? Elsa Lowry at Highwoods, Glen Innes, created a magical garden that is gone now but included, among other things, a wildflower meadow at a time when this was quite unusual in Australia. She kept extensive diaries, photographic, and other records including plant lists and invoices detailing, in particular, the influence of Paul Sorenson on her planting. But with infirmity the garden was soon overrun by the local mugs just as Jumjum may well be. Maybe if I stick to trees and am not 'waylaid by flowers and shrubs' (as Sorenson advised Elsa) my garden might have a future.

This was my first AGHS conference but surely there has been none better; a reflection, yes, of the altitude but—more's the point—the level of learning, the exceptional resources, and enthusiasm for the objects of the AGHS in this fine old university town. Many heartfelt thanks and sincere congratulations to the conference organising committee, convened by Lynne Walker, and her hardworking team.

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Jumjum, the working farm of owner and gardener **Jill Wran**, was visited recently as part of the pre- and post-conference tours of the 2013 AGHS Annual National Conference in Armidale, NSW.



# Profile: Ruth Morgan

Now a lecturer in the history department at Monash University in Melbourne, but hailing originally from Western Australia, Ruth Morgan was elected to the National Management Committee at the recent AGHS Annual General Meeting at Armidale.

I never expected to become an environmental historian, or an academic for that matter. My sights were firmly set elsewhere, until it dawned on me nearly a year after I completed my undergraduate studies that my dream career was looking anything but. Whatever new direction I sought would need further study. Discussing the situation with my former lecturers at my alma mater, The University of Western Australia, led me to realise that history had been the common thread in my studies and that further work in this area might form the foundation of a new direction. To explore this further, I met with UWA historian Andrea Gaynor, who encouraged me to undertake postgraduate studies in history. It should come as no surprise that my research interests soon took a decidedly environmental turn—Andrea is a leading Australian environmental historian and author of *Harvest of the Suburbs* (2006).

Meanwhile, Perth and the other Australian capital cities were in the grip of drought and households faced harsh water restrictions. In the nation's agricultural areas, the Millennium Drought (2001–7) was taking its toll and many Australians were becoming increasingly concerned that the extremely dry conditions were associated with anthropogenic climate change. With these issues at the forefront of my mind, I resolved to look more closely at the ways that the people of Perth had used water and how they had responded to water scarcity in the past.

As water restrictions highlight, a great deal of suburban water use takes place outside the home—in the garden, the backyard, and the nature strip or roadside verge. And here my research began to intersect with garden history. How did water, or a lack of it, affect gardeners and their gardens? Exploring this question introduced me to the works of George Seddon, Oline Richards, and John Viska, which in turn led me to see gardens in richer and more complex ways. Gardens, I soon realised, are expressions of attachments to place and community, as well as products of particular environments and styles.



Ruth Morgan at Merredin inspecting C.Y. O'Connor's Kalgoorlie Pipeline, which supplies water to the wheatbelt and the eastern goldfields.  
Photo: Richard Aitken



My initial research was especially focussed on the immediate past, when the authorities implemented a total water ban on Perth's garden sprinklers back in the late 1970s. One of the ways that gardeners responded then was to join the growing enthusiasm for native plants, believing that hardy Australian species did not need water to flourish. It was this study that led me to the Western Australian branch of the Australian Garden History Society, whose chair (and resident dynamo) Caroline Grant invited me to speak at the Annual General Meeting in 2009. There I found a warm and welcoming community of garden history enthusiasts who were keen to share with me their memories of Perth's native plant and garden movement.

Before I knew it, I had become a member of the Society and then elected to the branch committee. This led to my involvement in the research for the Historic Gardens of Perth exhibition at the Perth Town Hall, and my participation in the Resource of Landscape Forum at the University of Western Australia in 2011. There I met long-time Society member and *Australian Garden History* co-editor, Richard Aitken, who was presenting early ideas for his recently published book, *Cultivating Modernism* (2013). I was pleased to be selected soon after for the editorial mentoring programme of the Nina Crone Fund, which supported a tour of the Western Australian wheatbelt, its gardens, and its waterscapes. It was fitting then that our journey began at the Mundaring Weir, which supplies C.Y. O'Connor's Kalgoorlie Pipeline, the water source for the state's agricultural areas and goldfields. This experience helped me to think more broadly about my research and more critically about the craft of writing, both vital for what had become a doctoral project on water in southwestern Australia since the early nineteenth century.

In 2011, the AGHS embarked on a project to quietly expand its online presence through the free encyclopaedia, Wikipedia. The Wikipedia model of editable content allows users to contribute to existing encyclopaedia entries, or to create new ones. As I was familiar with the workings of this website and excited by the possibilities that it offered for sharing scholarly research, I put my hand up to be involved. We gradually selected biographical articles from *Australian Garden History* and entries from *The Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens* (2002) to supplement content already on the website, and identified people and places that warranted

new entries. By adding this content, we could draw researchers' attentions to the work of the Society, and to the field of Australian garden history more broadly.

Online tools such as Wikipedia, as well as Facebook, Instagram, and blogs, offer vibrant new spaces for likeminded people around the world to share their interest in garden history, whether it is for pleasure or research, and the AGHS will surely benefit from joining these digital conversations. The capacity of these online spaces to contribute to vast information networks will help the Society to mobilise wider support for its projects and initiatives, particularly those relating to heritage conservation across the country. Through these digital networks, the AGHS can also build on its relationships with other organisations and institutions, and collaborate on areas of shared concern.

*Online tools offer vibrant new spaces  
and the AGHS will surely benefit from  
joining these digital conversations*

After I completed my postgraduate studies in 2012, I moved to Melbourne to accept a position in the History Department at Monash University, where I have taught courses on Australian history and heritage. I am keenly interested in public history so I was thrilled to be elected to the National Management Committee of the Australian Garden History Society this year, where I hope to bring new perspectives to the table. For more than thirty years, the Society has done such important work and I see an exciting range of opportunities ahead that will enable us to adapt in the future, while respecting the history and traditions of the Society.

The 2014 Australian Garden History Society annual national conference in Albany, Western Australia, promises to be an exciting event. The conference is scheduled in October, on the eve of the town's commemoration of the ANZAC centenary, which will be marked by the Albany Convoy Commemorative Event to mark the anniversary of the departure of the first convoy of ships that carried the Australian Imperial Force and New Zealand Expeditionary Force to the Front. Developing these kinds of associations with other areas of historical interest in Australia will go far to ensure the longevity of the AGHS and the field of garden history in the decades ahead.



# Diary dates

## FEBRUARY 2014

**Thursday 13** Cultural and historic significance of Royal Park

VICTORIA

Join us in Royal Park to experience its exceptional significance as a designed landscape on a guided tour through many of its important historic and natural areas. BYO picnic to end. 6pm, Australian Native Garden, Royal Park (southeast corner, intersection Gatehouse Street and The Avenue). Enquiries to Anna Long on (03) 9820 8828 or [chris.long@internode.on.net](mailto:chris.long@internode.on.net)

**Saturday 15** Kitchen garden summer picnic

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

A kitchen garden summer picnic at the Berrima Public School. 4.30–7pm, Berrima Public School. Cost: \$28 AGHS members and guests. Enquiries to Lyn Esdaile on 0439 877 122 or [garlynar@bigpond.com](mailto:garlynar@bigpond.com)

**Sunday 16** Myall Park Botanic Gardens

QUEENSLAND

Nita Lester will present a lecture on recent developments at Myall Park at the Auditorium, Queensland Herbarium. Check the Branch webpage for details closer to the event.

**Wednesday 26** Early curators of Sydney's Botanic Gardens, 1816–1848

SYDNEY

Francis Jackson will present this talk. 6pm for 7–8.30pm, Annie Wyatt Room, National Trust Centre, Observatory Hill. Cost: \$20 members, \$30 guests, includes light refreshments. Bookings essential, to Jeanne Villani on (02) 9997 5995 or [Jeanne@Villani.com](mailto:Jeanne@Villani.com)



Courtesy State Library of New South Wales

## MARCH 2014

**Thursday 6** Brisbane Botanic Gardens

QUEENSLAND

A visit to the Brisbane Botanic Gardens lead by its former Supervisor, Maurice Wilson, followed by high tea at the nearby Royal on the Park. Check the Branch webpage for more details nearer to the event.

**Saturday 15** Working bee, Wombat Park

VICTORIA

10am start. Lifts can be organised. Enquiries to Fran Faul on (03) 9853 1369 or [malfaul@alphalink.com.au](mailto:malfaul@alphalink.com.au)

**Saturday 15** Corbett native garden, Fern Tree

TASMANIA

Two young scientists passionate about Tasmanian native plants developed this large garden after the 1967 bushfires. 1.30pm, 35 Pillinger Drive, Fern Tree on the corner of Bracken Lane, with access from Bracken Lane. For further details contact Wendy Ebsworth on [wendyebsworth@yahoo.com.au](mailto:wendyebsworth@yahoo.com.au)

**Wednesday 19** Cultivating Modernism: reading the modern garden 1917–71

SYDNEY

Illustrated lecture by Richard Aitken. 6pm for 7–8.30pm, Annie Wyatt Room, National Trust Centre, Observatory Hill. Cost: \$20 members, \$30 guests, includes light refreshments. Bookings essential, to Jeanne Villani on (02) 9997 5995 or [Jeanne@Villani.com](mailto:Jeanne@Villani.com)

**Saturday 29** Bowral gardens

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

A self-drive tour of Bowral gardens. Details to be confirmed closer to the event. Enquiries to Lyn Esdaile on 0439 877 122 or [garlynar@bigpond.com](mailto:garlynar@bigpond.com)

## APRIL 2014

**Saturday 12**

Working bee, Medlow

VICTORIA

Working Bee at Medlow. 10am start. Contact Fran Faul on (03) 9853 1369 or [malfaul@alphalink.com.au](mailto:malfaul@alphalink.com.au)

**Friday 25–Sunday 27**

A weekend in Warwick

QUEENSLAND

Save the date for this weekend event, which will begin in Tenterfield. Check the Branch webpage for more details nearer to the event.

**Late April (date tba)**

Endemic flora of Mt Field

TASMANIA

A guided tour to see the flora of different sites at Mt Field and specifically to experience stands of *Nothofagus gunnii* in autumn foliage. Check the Branch webpage for more details nearer to the event.

## OCTOBER 2014

**Friday 17–Monday 20**

AGHS Annual Nation Conference, Albany, Western Australia

The Australian Garden History Society's 35th Annual National Conference will be held in Albany, 17–20 October 2014. More information to come in the next issue of AGH 25(4), April/May/June 2014.



Tree silhouettes at Swanbourne, WA

Continued from page 27

### Tree Forum follow-up

Since the report by Greg Keighery on the recent AGHS WA Tree Forum (AGH 25 (1), 2013, pp.34–35) a number of developments have taken place. These include:

- The call in June 2013 (within a month of the Tree Forum) by a presenter on ABC 720 local Perth radio for establishment of an exceptional tree register;
- An article by Forum speaker Greg Moore published in *Gardening Australia* (September 2013) on the economic benefits of the urban forest;
- Communication between Helen Brown, a public health researcher at Curtin University, and City of Stirling personnel who attended the Tree Forum, concerning the relationship between the urban canopy and health;
- Research collaboration between one of the sponsors (a tree nursery) and a tree surgeon (whose paper on maintaining the health of the urban forest was facilitated by the forum);
- Tree strategies have been announced in a number of local government areas of Perth, including my own local council of Claremont that has its strategy out for public comment; [http://www.claremont.wa.gov.au/Libraries/ContentDocs/Claremont\\_Street\\_MasterPlan\\_2013.sflb.ashx](http://www.claremont.wa.gov.au/Libraries/ContentDocs/Claremont_Street_MasterPlan_2013.sflb.ashx)
- The Adelaide Treenet symposium (September 2013) had a focus on water quality and trees, and included papers on the effects of biodiversity on water quality and health, and the importance of access to water bodies and green spaces for mental health, particularly amongst the ageing population of rural Australia; <http://www.treenet.com.au/>
- The new member for the federal seat of Perth, Alannah McTiernan, who gave the 2013 Stephenson-Hepburn oration, has demonstrated an interest in green space in the future planning for Perth, as housing density increases.

My response to these developments is summarised elsewhere in this issue (see pp.18–19).

Caroline Grant





John Taylor

## *Melbourne's Royal Park under threat*

Melbourne's Royal Park, a place of outstanding cultural significance, is under grave threat from a massive freeway link, and the AGHS has objected to this unacceptable incursion into public parkland.

Royal Park is one of Australia's most significant public parks. Historically it embodies tales of Burke and Wills, of Victoria's Acclimatisation Society, and of the zoological garden that forms a much-loved centrepiece. Culturally it has enduring associations for Aboriginal communities, with Melbourne's strong tradition of recreation and leisure, and embodying rich landscape design traditions stretching from the 1850s to the present. It is to Melbourne and Melbournians what Centennial Park is to Sydney, the Domain to Hobart, King's Park to Perth, and the park lands to Adelaide. Such places require the highest form of protection and vigilance. So it was with dismay that the Australian Garden History Society greeted the recent proposal to utilise Royal Park for a partially underground freeway link connecting roads to the east and west.

Royal Park has long been regarded as iconic Melbourne parkland. A large area to the north of Melbourne (between North Melbourne, Parkville,

Brunswick, and Flemington) it creates distinct spatial experiences through a mix of open and enclosed spaces. The dominant character of the park is of seemingly natural and rural landscapes derived from the predominance of Australian trees and grassland areas, a sharp contrast to the built fabric of Royal Park's urban context and the city's other cultivated gardens.

Royal Park's development has been influenced by myriad factors, including many design campaigns. In the recent past this has included a comprehensive masterplan by Brian Stafford and Ron Jones (as Laceworks Landscape Collaborative), which in 1984 gave the place its present unified character. This design hinged on an editing of horticultural clutter to accentuate natural landforms, mature Australian trees, and to convey a sense of the power and spaciousness of the Australian landscape. The resulting simplicity, however, is deceptive, instead the product of carefully considered design decisions.

The rich history and cultural heritage values of Royal Park were recently subject to an independent assessment completed on behalf of the City of Melbourne (September 2013). The assessment found that the heritage values of Royal Park are complex and multi-layered; that the whole park has

A near perfect photographic representation of the drawings from the 1984 Royal Park masterplan design competition (see AGH, 25 (2), 2013, p.2). Photographed in 2005, the wide, open space of the native grasslands strongly reflects the intent of the design as an analogy of the wider Australian landscape.  
Photo: courtesy R. Jones





One of the wetland areas within Royal Park (now called 'the Billabong') constructed in c.1990 as part of the staged implementation of the 1984 masterplan design by Laceworks Landscape Collaborative.

Photo: Christina Dyson

significance; that it meets the criteria in the *Heritage Act* for historic, aesthetic, and social significance; and that the landscaping in the park arising from the celebrated 1984 masterplan has special significance.

Paradoxically the simplicity of the 1984 masterplan also contributes to its vulnerability. This makes its cultural and historic significance less easily read and makes Royal Park vulnerable to adverse impacts through misunderstanding, intrusive development, misguided maintenance, or neglect.

Royal Park is currently threatened by a Victorian government major infrastructure project, the East West Link. The western portal of the proposed road tunnel project proposes two surface connections, flyovers, realignment of the exiting tramline, and road widening to accommodate increased traffic volume—all within Royal Park. Ventilation structures may also be required but little information has been provided about these. On 31 October 2013 the Linking Melbourne Authority (the project proponent appointed by the Victorian Minister for Planning) released a Comprehensive Impact Statement (CIS) for the East West Link project for public comment.

The AGHS has made a submission to the East West Link (Eastern Section) Project Assessment Committee. The submission argues that planning for the project has not properly considered the impacts of the project on Royal Park and that it fails to take into account the devastating effects of the proposed works on the Park's

cultural significance to Victoria and as a substantial asset which is available to meet the needs of the city in the centuries ahead. The Society believes that project fails to recognise that Royal Park is a significant cultural landscape, instead treating it as land of no special value to be used in the project to reduce cost. The real price that present and future generations of Victorians will pay for the devastation of Royal Park by this project is simply unacceptable.

A public hearing will be held in March–April 2014 at which time the CIS and submissions responding to the CIS will be considered by a Project Assessment Committee. The Committee will prepare a report for the Minister for Planning who will make the final decision on the project. At this hearing the AGHS is to be represented by Dr John Dwyer QC.

The potentially severe threats to the cultural significance and future value of Royal Park highlight the need for great vigilance, especially in response to projects that chip away at irreplaceable parkland assets. Critically important too is the Society's contribution to a unified voice alongside and in support of kindred organisations who also appreciate the significance of Royal Park and see their role as stewards of this special place including the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (who recently nominated Royal Park to the Victorian Heritage Register), the National Trust of Australia (Victoria), and the City of Melbourne. The AGHS can and must play a vital part in advocacy through 'committed, relevant, sustainable action'.



## Mission Statement

The Australian Garden History Society is the leader in concern for and conservation of significant cultural landscapes and historic gardens through committed, relevant and sustainable action.